

Resilient Communities Need Gender Data

Decades of progress on gender equality and inclusive sustainable development are being eroded by compounding global crises, including conflicts, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic. To support the resilience of women, girls, and gender-diverse groups—as well as their households and communities—during (and beyond) these crises, gender data is a key solution. Governments must collect and use gender data to identify and effectively respond to women’s, girls’, and gender-diverse communities’ needs and to document their contributions to crisis mitigation and recovery.

HOW DOES GENDER DATA SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESILIENCE?

Resilient communities, households, and individuals are equipped with the tools and capacities not only to respond to immediate crises and shocks, but also to adapt to future risks and recover from them in safe, sustainable ways. In many crisis situations, women and girls may have less access to the information, resources, and support that are critical to promote their own resilience. In other instances, [women and girls can play an essential role](#) in helping their households to weather disasters, promoting family wellbeing through their contributions to household production and care, or by shifting to the labor market in response to economic shocks. In either case, better gender data is needed to document the disparate impacts of crises on women and girls, as well as their contributions to resilience, in order to inform policies, decision making, and the design of relief and recovery efforts.

“Resilience” refers to the ability of communities, households, and individuals to resist, absorb, accommodate, and recover positively from exposure to a crisis or shock event in a manner that is timely and efficient, and that preserves essential structures and functions ([United Nations, 2021](#)).

“Gender data” is data that is disaggregated by sex, and reflects gender issues, including roles, relations, and inequalities. It can be both quantitative and qualitative, and collection methods account for stereotypes, social norms, and other factors that may introduce bias.

Gender data comes from a range of sources including civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, population-based surveys, censuses, and administrative data produced by justice, health, and education systems. In addition to these traditional data sources, gender data from digital technologies such as social media, mobile phone applications, and geospatial information are garnering increased attention and use. Together these sources comprise the gender data ecosystem, and produce the information necessary to understand the lives of women, girls, and gender-diverse groups.

THE PROBLEM: HOW CRISES IMPACT WOMEN, GIRLS, AND GENDER DATA SYSTEMS

When crises strike, gender inequalities and discrimination are often exacerbated. Across key areas of development, women and girls face serious challenges and effects that hinder their wellbeing, opportunities, and resilience in the face of crises.

Without available gender data, it is impossible to understand the full scale of challenges that women and girls experience during crises, or the contributions that they make to help weather the most adverse effects on households and communities. Unfortunately, gender data for many key global indicators of gender equality and sustainable development are [missing or incomplete](#) (see the [accompanying infographic](#) for examples), resulting in a lack of baseline data available to compare the situation of women and girls before and after crises strike. Gender data systems also suffer from chronic underinvestment (they are [underfunded by \\$500 million USD per year](#)), and recent crises have led to further scarcity in domestic and foreign aid budgets to collect gender data. For example, [more than half of national statistical offices](#) in low- and lower middle-income countries experienced budget cuts during COVID-19, impeding their ability to monitor the disparate health, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic for women and girls.

Transforming the Data Landscape: Solutions to Close Gender Data Gaps

A joint [report by Data2X and Open Data Watch](#) seeks to mitigate challenges caused by ongoing environmental, health, and humanitarian crises by identifying proven solutions to close gender data gaps and drive both gender equality and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. By highlighting lessons learned and providing access to a [comprehensive solutions inventory](#), the report seeks to bridge the gap between data and action.

Gender data systems are further affected by crises and shocks due to the unique challenges of data collection in insecure environments. For example, during emergencies, sex-disaggregated data on deaths, illness, and disability are difficult to collect and not widely available because normal CRVS systems and registration processes may be disrupted. When populations are internally or externally displaced due to armed conflict or natural disasters, it is more difficult to reach them and capture their perspectives and experiences with existing data instruments. In-person data collection from censuses and population-based surveys also poses risks to both respondents and researchers in contexts affected by political tensions, environmental hazards, or health outbreaks. Likewise, mobility constraints and damaged infrastructure can prevent women and girls from accessing services like police and hospitals, leading to the underreporting of administrative data on issues that increase during emergencies, such as [gender-based violence](#).

Data Systems in Crisis: The Impact of COVID-19 on CRVS Systems in Africa

Survey research conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in March 2020 found that 75% of CRVS offices in Africa faced service disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In some cases, CRVS offices were closed during lockdowns, or offered only limited services by appointment. Some governments also adopted a policy that people who die during the pandemic should be buried within 24 hours, with no post-mortems or death certificates completed. Due to mobility restrictions and fears of exposure to the virus, more women opted for home births rather than utilizing health facilities where birth certificates could be issued.

As a result of these disruptions, some African countries saw steep declines in the registration of births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. This has the potential to jeopardize the rights of individuals to access government services and support, including women and girls. For example, without a legal identity established at birth, children may not have access to essential services during and post-COVID, such as education and health care, and girls may be less protected against child marriage. When marriages and deaths are not registered, women lack protections and are less able to access social benefits or claim inheritance if their spouse dies from the virus.

In emergency situations, well-functioning CRVS systems provide an essential link between the government and those who need support to navigate uncertain times. This is critical for a quick response that serves the most vulnerable and impacted members of a community during crises.

Source: [Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems and UNECA, 2021](#)

[Available evidence demonstrates](#) that strong gender data systems are key to supporting community and household resilience during crises, and the cost of inaction is high. Persistent gender data gaps hinder governments' understanding of how armed conflicts, natural disasters, health epidemics, and other major emergencies uniquely and disproportionately impact women and girls. These data gaps further limit governments' ability to devise evidence-based policies that equip communities with the tools to respond, recover, and strengthen their own resilience to withstand future shocks.

THE OPPORTUNITY: HOW GOVERNMENTS CAN USE GENDER DATA TO SUPPORT WOMEN, GIRLS, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING CRISES

In the sea of urgent and competing priorities amid conflicts, climate change, and COVID-19, having strong systems to produce and use **gender data can help governments meet the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse groups, enhance their contributions to crisis mitigation and recovery, and support the resilience of entire communities in the process.** It does so by:

- Making visible the most vulnerable and impacted women and girls in a community
- Providing baseline data to compare the situation of women and girls before and after crises
- Supporting real-time insights for rapid response while ensuring the quality and accuracy of data collected
- Promoting the participation of women and girls in data collection efforts to ensure their perspectives, experiences, and contributions are captured
- Informing evidence-based policies and decision making to ultimately maximize limited resources
- Supplying households and communities with the information they need to respond, adapt, and recover from shocks

Ultimately, gender data helps to identify the full range and magnitude of challenges faced by women and girls during crises, as well as the contributions they make, which in turn can be used to pinpoint solutions that help to strengthen their resilience. Some women and girls are more vulnerable and affected than others during crises because of poverty, disability, or other factors. This is why, wherever possible, **gender data collection and analysis should adopt an intersectional approach** and disaggregate data by multiple dimensions to capture differences based on income, age, race, ethnicity, location (urban/rural), indigenous status, migration status, disability, and other characteristics. Establishing strong gender data systems today can help to ensure that data is available to inform response and recovery efforts when crisis strikes so that no one is left behind.

Using Gender Data to Support Women and Girls in Crisis: Rapid Gender Analysis of the War in Ukraine

As of April 2022, 5.5 million refugees have already fled Ukraine, and the number of internally displaced people has reached 7.7 million. Of those who have fled the country, it is estimated that 90% are women and children. A rapid gender analysis carried out by UN Women and CARE International aims to draw attention to the gender dynamics of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the war. It uses primary and secondary data sources to compare pre-conflict data on the situation of women and girls in Ukraine with up-to-date information as the war evolves.

A key finding of the analysis is that the crisis is exacerbating pre-existing gender and intersectional inequalities and discrimination. Women and girls are being differentially affected, facing significantly increased safety and protection risks (especially gender-based violence and trafficking), challenges accessing essential services, and greater loss of livelihoods. At the same time, women and women's rights groups are found to be largely absent in decision making at local and national levels, as well as in the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine.

The analysis identifies specific recommendations for donors and humanitarian actors to support women, girls, and other vulnerable groups during the conflict by ensuring:

- That data, evidence, and women's voices inform gender-responsive and intersectional humanitarian responses and are reflected in budgeting, programming, and service-delivery
- The meaningful participation of women, including those from marginalized groups, in all decision-making processes
- The protection, evacuation, and access to information and services for populations with limited mobility, women activists and human rights defenders, and LGBTQIA+ individuals
- That internally displaced women, refugees, and humanitarian assistance actors are aware of the risks of trafficking and are taking effective prevention and protection measures
- The continuity of gender-based violence services and updated referral pathways within communities

Source: [UN Women and CARE International, 2022](#)

Better use of digital technologies such as social media, mobile phone applications, and geospatial information can help fill gender data gaps, support real-time insights during crises, and foster greater participation of women and girls in data collection efforts by enabling them to self-report their perspectives and experiences. These technologies offer a new vehicle for widely and rapidly deploying surveys and other data collection tools, especially during conflicts,

natural disasters, and health outbreaks when in-person data collection poses risks. Where government capacity is limited, partnerships can be forged with technology companies and organizations like [Safetipin](#), which uses a mobile-phone application and geospatial data to collect and share self-reported information on gender-based violence, harassment, and public safety in order to create safer and more inclusive cities for women. Digital technologies can also be leveraged to share key data and information with households and communities during crises, and even to apply for and distribute financial relief.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STEPS FORWARD FOR GOVERNMENTS

There are actions that governments can take immediately to strengthen gender data and support the resilience of women, girls, their households, and their communities during current and future crises.

- **Contribute to closing the global gender data financing gap.** Funding for gender data can come from domestic resources (national budgets), as well as earmarking and increasing funding for data collection in international development assistance and humanitarian relief efforts. Investments should target the core gender data systems that are implicated during crises, such as CRVS systems, and promote the use of digital technologies and rapid gender analysis to support real-time insights during emergencies.
- **Move beyond data collection to use in order to identify and respond effectively to the needs of women and girls during crises, and to enhance their contributions to crisis mitigation and recovery.** The true value of gender data is not in its collection, but rather in its uptake and use to inform evidence-based policies and decision making. Government attention and resources should be focused [across the “gender data value chain”](#) from production to use, in order to realize the full benefits of gender data.
- **Engage women and girls in data collection to ensure their perspectives, experiences, and contributions are captured and integrated into national strategies, plans, and policies on crisis prevention, preparation, and response.** The use of digital technologies such as social media, mobile phone applications, and geospatial information can facilitate self-reported data from women and girls in real-time, enabling a dynamic response to crises and the sharing of key information and support with households and communities.
- **Adopt an intersectional approach to ensure no one is left behind in response and recovery efforts.** Collect and disaggregate gender data by multiple dimensions to identify the most vulnerable and impacted women and girls during crises, and to capture differences based on income, age, race, ethnicity, location, indigenous status, migration status, disability, or other characteristics. This type of intersectional information and analysis is crucial to design inclusive response and recovery plans.
- **Support capacity building of national statistical offices to monitor the gendered impact of current crises and help prepare for future ones.** Investments in gender data should target national statistical offices, including those in developing countries, with financial assistance, technical assistance, and training to improve effectiveness. Building the capacity of national statistical offices during non-crisis times will enable better monitoring of gendered impacts in the event of a crisis, when government capacity and resources are constrained.

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